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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000026

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NORTH KOREA: ITALY FLOATS IDEA OF "HUMANITARIAN"  
OIL SHIPMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MC THOMAS COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: ITALIAN MFA EMPHASIZED IT SHARES OUR VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IN NORTH KOREA AND THE NEED TO BE FIRM WITH PYONGYANG. THE MFA'S DG FOR ASIAN AFFAIRS, WHILE UNDERSTANDING THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE USG'S REJECTION OF REWARDING THE DPRK WITH A DIRECT DIALOGUE, STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING OUT OF THIS IMPASSE. HE PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING IDEA: HAVE THE EU, JAPAN, AND SOUTH KOREA OFFER "HUMANITARIAN" SHIPMENTS OF OIL TO NORTH KOREA AS A WAY TO CHANGE THE DYNAMIC AND GIVE PYONGYANG A CHANCE TO STEP DOWN FROM ITS POSITION. ITALY WANTS TO GET THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW ON THIS IDEA BEFORE SHARING IT WITH EU PARTNERS IN A MEETING IN BRUSSELS JAN 9. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

2. (U) IN A STATEMENT DEC 27, THE MFA EXPRESSED "STRONG CONCERN" OVER N. KOREA'S DECISION TO EXPEL THE IAEA INSPECTORS AND URGED PYONGYANG TO COMPLY WITH ITS PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS. THE STATEMENT ADDED THAT FM FRATTINI INSTRUCTED POL DG ARAGONA TO SUMMON THE N. KOREAN AMBASSADOR. ON DEC 30, ARAGONA MET WITH THE AMBASSADOR OF THE DPRK AND UNDERScoreD THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S CONCERN WITH THE DPRK'S RECENT DECISIONS TO REACTIVATE THE YONGBYON'S POWER PLANT AND EXPEL THE IAEA INSPECTORS. "A SIGNIFICANT SIGNAL DENOTING THAT NORTH KOREA IS RE-EXAMINING ITS NUCLEAR POLICIES COULD ENCOURAGE THE POSSIBILITY OF HELPING MEET NORTH KOREA'S ENERGY NEEDS AND RECREATE A FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION," SAID ARAGONA IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT.

3. (C) ON JAN 3, AT THE MFA'S REQUEST, POL MC MET WITH THE MFA'S DG FOR ASIAN AFFAIRS, AMBASSADOR GUIDO MARTINI, TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION IN N. KOREA. MARTINI EXPRESSED THE GOI'S UNHAPPINESS WITH PYONGYANG'S INITIATIVES IN THE NUCLEAR SECTOR, ITS WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST THE U.S. AS AN ALLY, AND ITS DESIRE TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THE USG POSITION ON N. KOREA IS. MARTINI DESCRIBED THE DPRK REGIME AS A RIGID AND BRUTAL REGIME THAT RARELY OBEYS LOGIC, AND EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN THAT TOO FIRM A STAND BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MAY FURTHER AGGRAVATE AN ALREADY DELICATE SITUATION. MARTINI SAID THAT A "HUMANITARIAN APPROACH" TO THE N. KOREA CRISIS MAY EASE THE TENSIONS AND PREVENT THE SITUATION FROM DETERIORATING EVEN FURTHER.

4. (C) IN REPLY, POL MC:  
-- REFERRED MARTINI TO THE SECRETARY'S DEC 29 STATEMENT ON N. KOREA.  
-- STATED THAT THE USG IS LOOKING FOR A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO THE SITUATION IN N. KOREA. WHILE NO OPTION IS EXCLUDED, THERE ARE MANY TOOLS AVAILABLE TO US BEFORE CONSIDERING MILITARY FORCE.  
-- UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF VIEWING THE CURRENT SITUATION NOT AS A BILATERAL PROBLEM BETWEEN THE USG AND THE DPRK, BUT AS A PROBLEM INVOLVING THE ENTIRE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SINCE N. KOREA VIOLATED AGREEMENTS SIGNED NOT ONLY BY THE USG, BUT ALSO BY THE EU, THE UN, AND S. KOREA. SOLONA'S STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT ON DEC 27 WAS ESPECIALLY APPRECIATED.  
-- EXPLAINED THE USG INFLEXIBILITY ON DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH THE DPRK BY STATING THAT IT WOULD SEND THE WRONG MESSAGE NOT JUST TO N. KOREA, BUT TO SOME OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL, TO REWARD N. KOREA FOR LYING AND VIOLATING ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS. THE DPRK KILLED THE DIALOGUE WITH THE USG AND IT WILL NOT REVIVE IT BY ESCALATING THREATS.  
-- URGED THE GOI AND THE EU TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CONVEY TO THE DPRK THAT ITS MISCALCULATED STEPS MOVED IT SEVERAL STEPS BACKWARDS FROM THE DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING IT CLAIMS TO SEEK FROM WASHINGTON.

5. (C) MARTINI AGREED WITH THE USG ON NOT REWARDING N. KOREA FOR ITS MISCALCULATED STEPS. HE TOOK WELL ON BOARD POL MC'S POINT THAT ITALY SHOULD MAKE CLEAR TO PYONGYANG THAT IT HAS STEPPED SHARPLY BACKWARD FROM ITS GOAL OF GETTING RESPECT AND A DIALOGUE FROM WASHINGTON. HE ADDED HOWEVER THAT THE DPRK IS KNOWN NEITHER FOR ITS CREATIVITY NOR FOR ITS ADHESION TO LOGIC (HE NOTED THAT THE DPRK AMBASSADOR HAD RESPONDED TO THE MFA'S DEC 30 DEMARCHE WITH A LONG DISCOURSE ON THE USS PUEBLO.) A WAY OUT OF THIS IMPASSE WOULD THEREFORE NEED TO COME FROM OUTSIDE THE DPRK. HE THEN FLOATED THE IDEA OF HAVING THE EU, JAPAN, AND S. KOREA DELIVER "HUMANITARIAN" OIL SHIPMENTS TO N. KOREA. THIS WOULD SUSTAIN THE SHIPMENTS PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS, BUT USING THE "VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION" MECHANISM OF KEDO. THUS, THE USG WOULD NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR THESE SHIPMENTS.

16. (C) MARTINI SAID HE HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED THIS IDEA WITH

ACTION EAP-00

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M-00	AC-01	NRRC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OES-00	
OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	
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